1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



throughout the eight tribes. The horde, dealt with in the chapter on technology, and the phratry may or may not be present in a given area. The tribe is of minor importance in native life.

### The Clan

The Murngin clan is an exogamic patrilineal group averaging forty or fifty individuals who possess a common territory which averages 300 square miles.[6] This group possesses one or more sacred totemic water holes, formed by a creator totem, in which the whole of the tribal life is focussed; all members of the clan are born from this water hole, and all go back to it at death; in it the totem's spirits live with the mythological ancestor, the souls of the dead, and the unborn children. The male members of the clan who can be the permanent occupants of the group's land possess totemic emblems in common.

A clan frequently has an exclusive name for its people and another preferred one that defines the language spoken by this people as different from that of all other clans. The clan is exogamous by virtue of belonging to a moiety, which prevents marriage within its half of the tribe. Theoretically an individual can marry into any one of the clans in the opposite moiety. The tribal and intertribal myths of the moiety which are saturated with themes expressing the local organization of these people always devote small parts of their stories to the special circumstances of the creation of a clan. They also give its association with the totems and other elements of tribal life considered important by these people. The more localized myths which concern only two or three clans usually symbolize intra-clan solidarity and inter-clan antagonism. The ceremonies possessed by a clan, like the totems, are ordinarily owned by other similar groups belonging to the same moiety, although local variations in totem and ceremony occur.

The following relatives are always found in a clan: marikmo[6] (father's father and father's father's sister), bapa (father), mokul bapa (father's sister), wawa (older brother), yukiyuko (younger brother), yeppa (sister), gatu (son and daughter), and maraitcha (son's son and son's daughter). In other words, these relatives are in ego's brother's

[6] For additional elements in the clan configuration see Part III.

[6] See Chart II, page 90, for the place of kinship terms in the kinship system. Native terms have been used more frequently than the author would have liked, but it was impossible always to give an exact translation in a few words. It seems better to define a word carefully at least once, and thereafter use the term. (See Glossary of Native Terms.)

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

CHAPTER VIII

# A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF MAGIC

## Section I. The Problem of Ritual and Magic Presented by the Northern and Southern Areas

Since the northeastern clans share a belief in magic but lack magical techniques and magicians, the people there either are forced to travel to the south and west for treatment by white magicians, such visits being comparatively rare, or resort to other means found within their own area.

In the south and west black and white magicians are found who have definite techniques for curing and for killing.

The social organizations of the two areas are identical; the totemic situation is the same, and in general there is little variation in the culture except for magical practices. With magical treatment absent in the north, the problem arises as to what to substitute for it, since there is the obvious necessity of attempting to cure an ailing man.

Throughout the north there is a general *belief* in black magic, but it is ascribed to sorcerers operating in the south. The relevant northern thinking on illness is not different from that in the southern area where the offending magician is also an outsider of the clan and the near kinship group. The difference is that there is no sorcerer within the northern groups to whom the people can appeal for punitive magic. It is analogous to knowing the effects of heavy artillery but not possessing it. The magical folklore of the north is sufficiently gruesome to cause the most fearsome apprehension in the minds of people who believe their illnesses caused by such practices.

The two more common accounts of black magical practices believed in throughout the northern Murngin clans and among all the surrounding tribes follow.

1. Two or three magicians follow a man when he is by himself, rush upon him, and throw a spear into him. The man falls down and the others rush upon him. He is in a kind of coma. The mouth cannot move but

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



can kill or cure is in the totemic well and surrounding sacred rituals and objects. They belong to the general category of "inside" or sacred. The power of magic to secure these same effects comes directly from the dead, who belong to the same "inside" category as contrasted with the "outside." The two categories are both "dal" or sacred, and both ritual and magic are channels by which this power can be correctly expressed in the world of the profane.

## Section II. A Sociological Interpretation of Black and White Magic—How Magic Works

### *Statement of the Problem*

Durkheim's "church" among the Arunta is a clan organization. Each clan celebrates its spiritual unity through the unifying concept of the totem and with such objective symbols as the totemic emblem, its rituals and myths. Magic and the magician, on the other hand, fail to become part of religion and are antithetical to it because they have no church, says Durkheim. The magician as an individual manipulates techniques, and his power is the opposite of that of the priest (or ceremonial leader), who functions as ritual leader of the group. It is the thesis of this chapter that the essential nature of magic and ritual is the same, both expressing a fundamental unity and functioning alike for the individual and for the group, at least in Murngin society.

The analysis of Murngin magic to determine its nature is divided as follows: (1) a test of the magical belief of the north, which does not possess magical "techniques," with that of the south, which does; (2) an examination of the social configuration of magic in the south by (a) seeing what part ritual plays not only in the north but in the south, and (b) examining how the individual and the society behave when magic is put into effect.

### *The Test of the Northern and Southern Areas*

The Murngin offer an excellent opportunity to study the nature of magic in relation to the social organization and society generally, particularly in relation to religion. The northern and eastern clans lack the medicine men of the southern and western clans and depend on one of the rituals for healing. The social organization of both groups is identical, the kinship system, the moiety divisions, et cetera, being the same even to minute detail. We can thus observe what elements are found in the non-personalized magic of the north and

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



121 184 how they operate in the area of the southern shamans. From this we can possibly find out what generalized elements of the culture are organized into the social personality of the medicine man. As our analysis develops, it may be possible to determine whether ritual and magic are essentially different in their fundamentals. In the north therapeutic magic is a curative ritual; the two are one. The ritual used here is that of parts of the mourning ceremony belonging to the ordinary garma variety. This curing ritual may serve as a circumcision rite if the group needs a short ceremony to circumcise a boy before the wet season starts, for otherwise they will have to wait until the next dry season, running the chance of the boy's being too big for the operation.

121 182 The society goes through a prophylactic performance at its yearly totemic ritual;[1] at the death of a member there is a prophylactic ceremony in the mourning rite for the recently dead, which, in that aspect of its expression, is as much magical as it is religious, the purposes and social forces back of it being both. If the mourning ceremony were not held the soul would linger with the living, causing sickness and possible death. The leaf ceremony in the mourning rite chases the dead soul away. The various communions exclude the soul from the group, the entire mourning ceremony forcing it out of the society and into the totemic well. The sacred cannot remain with the profane; as Durkheim has pointed out, sacredness is contagious, hence dangerous (a lingering soul might make the living ill), and the two realms must be kept separate.

The medicine man who removes the hard object injected by a malignant mokoi, or the bone injected by an outraged totemic being or another sorcerer, is doing the same thing for the society and its individuals as the mourning rite. The magician too is performing a ritual which has no validity, since he has no position or power, unless the group sanctions it. The medicine man's social personality and the sources of his power are located within the group. The white magician is but the reverse of the coin on whose other surface appears the black sorcerer. The white magician through his personal mana helps the sick individual readjust himself to his social environment.

A prerequisite of social conditioning and adjustment is a normal organism, normal not only in biological fact but also in the values of the group. The normal human being not only among the savage Murngin but in any society, according to the evaluations of the

[1] See Chapter IX, Murngin Totemism.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



Island when a man died but I could see no spirit. I think that is a lie."

The father of the dead man or some other near relative has a large cake of palm-nut bread made by the women and divides this food among the members of his own moiety and those of the mother's group. This is supposed to force the dead soul to leave because he is not participating with the rest in the communion. Everyone is afraid to have the soul linger about the camp because it might go looking for fish and turtle and other animal food and frighten these animals away so that the living could not kill them.

The father or other relatives then build a small fire, gather and place on it bunches of green leaves until they are smoking, and then brush them over the bodies of all the people, both male and female, who are relatives of the dead person, with the purpose of chasing away the soul of the dead. This ceremony may be involved with a considerably longer ritual or may consist of the mere brushing of the smoking leaves on the bodies of the relatives.

After the garma fire ritual, mokul bapa, yeppa and mari (male and female) talk among themselves and then to the body and to its dead mari's and old marikmo's souls which are supposed to be by it. "Don't you cause trouble and get angry with us. We are only going to keep this dead man a little while, then we are going to give him to you and you can keep him, but don't you cause trouble." Sometimes the father or near relative dreams that the old grandfather has come to him and has said that he now should be in control of the new soul and wants that soul immediately.

*The Garma or Main Camp Ceremony.*—Since the various types of garma rituals are interwoven in all parts of the mourning ceremonies it seems best to digress a moment and describe all of them at once. The garma type of ceremony is found among all the clans of the tribes studied (except possibly the Liagaomir and Naladaer clans). The garmas are primarily for mortuary ceremonies but can be used for circumcisions. There is a considerable geographical variation in the kinds of garmas, particularly between those of the tribes centered around the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria and those among the peoples along the Glyde River. There is also a clan variation, since the various clans include in their cycle of songs objects which are of immediate significance to the clan. The clan variation is very slight, however, and usually for the purpose of including references to the totemic well and the objects surrounding it. There is a rather consider-

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



764 able individual variation, since some leaders will include many more
● 184 items than others. The material presented here has been selected more or less on the basis of including the normal songs and of what the most informed Murngin considered the ideal way of expressing them. Selections have been made from the clans in the east and west and include garma songs of both moieties in the two regions.

The Warnt-djer (leaf), a garma type of ceremony for the removal of the spirits of the dead, is found among both the Yiritja and Dua clans, except the Liagaomir, Naladaer and Ding Ding. The mast ceremony (mar-ai-yir-ri) is found among the eastern Yiritja clans, including the Gunalbingu, the Warumeri, the Kolpa, Wangurri, Darlwongo, Birkili, Komaits, Burilung, Kiki and Maradunggimi. The Barnumbir or Morning Star ceremony is used only by the Dua clans; it has a general distribution. The western Dua groups use Yurlunggur in their garma ceremonies; the eastern people do not. The cockatoo or ni-erk type of ceremony is found only among the Yiritja clans of both the east and west. The Nierk ceremony is used for the raising of the hollow log coffin and at times for a circumcision which would come immediately after putting up the hollow log. This sequent association of mourning and circumcision rites has a rather important interpretative significance.

764 The garma type of songs and ceremonies as well as the Narra has a
533 central core of ritual which is known as the land- and sea-ways. Each moiety has a land-way cycle of garma songs and a sea-way cycle. The sea-way cycle describes the movement of the tide and the sea into the land, up through the tidal rivers, and into the small lakes. The sea-way describes a canoe coming on with the tide. Various activities take place in bringing the canoe in and beaching it. The occupant of the canoe is a Wongar man. Various occurrences while the canoe is coming in show the rise of the tide and its flow into the land. The ritualistic songs and occasional dances in this sea-way cycle express the intimate relations of man to his natural environment, and transmute nature into man's social structure and social values, and man into nature's order. The land-way cycle is the exact opposite of the sea-way. It describes the clouds gathering in the high country, the rain coming from the clouds, the rivulets running into the creeks, the creeks into the larger rivers, and the great rainy-season flood going to the sea. The various creatures associated with this natural phenomenon are brought into the sequence of songs.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17



ritual occasions. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding their binding ritual and economic obligations, the descent group as such is the only unit to which one may turn to obtain aid which will be given more or less automatically.

As Leach has said (1951:53), "the network of kinship relations embraces a great number of local groups [corporate descent groups] and ties them into a kind of loosely knit political system; but throughout the population so linked there is no strong sense of social solidarity and in some cases there are even wide differences of language [as among the linguistic groups] and culture [not in this case, however] between different parts of the one system." That is to say, the usual characteristics of tribal organization are lacking; and it is for that reason that these people of eastern Arnhem Land belong to what I have called the Wulamba bloc, speaking a number of related dialects of one language which in toto are referred to as Miwoidj.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The Wulamba material carries a number of general theoretical implications. These concern primarily, in this context, the corporate or unilineal descent group. The minimal propositions discussed by Leach (1951:52–53) mainly refer to the question of relationship between wife-givers and wife-receivers, and the differentiation of status. These arguments regarding the relevance of status concepts to the analysis of "bride-price" (i.e., bride-wealth) and dowry have not been followed up to any extent here. The status concepts which do exist in Wulamba social life, and are reflected in their kinship system, are those dependent on seniority and reinforced by ritual and sacred ceremony. Other factors linked with status considerations are the prestige attaching to fighting ability, to proficiency in magic, and to parenthood as such. Status derived from these sources need not coincide with ritual and ceremonial status, nor with status associated with seniority in a descent group or a linguistic group. Nevertheless, discussion of all these features would be relevant in any detailed study of kinship and social organization (see Sharp 1934:418–20). But status dependent on being a "wife-receiver" or "wife-giver" is to my mind not relevant. A man's status is not necessarily derived from or enhanced by his being a "wife-giver." It so happens that the "wife-giver" will be socially "superior" (although the term "superior" has connotations which I do not think are applicable here), but he is possessed of this status whether or not he accedes to the expectation that he will give his daughter to his Sr.S. I admit, however, with Leach, that a more detailed analysis is necessary of the economic aspects of the effects of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. As he states (1951:45), "the reciprocities of kinship obligation are not merely symbols of alliance, they are also economic transactions, political transactions, charters to rights of domicile and land use."[4]

Leach points out that when Kachin-type marriage (and presumably Wulamba marriage) occurs—i.e., matrilateral cross-cousin marriage—it is part of the political structure. Now this may certainly be the case among the Kachin, or among certain African groups, but is it the case among the Wulamba? Our

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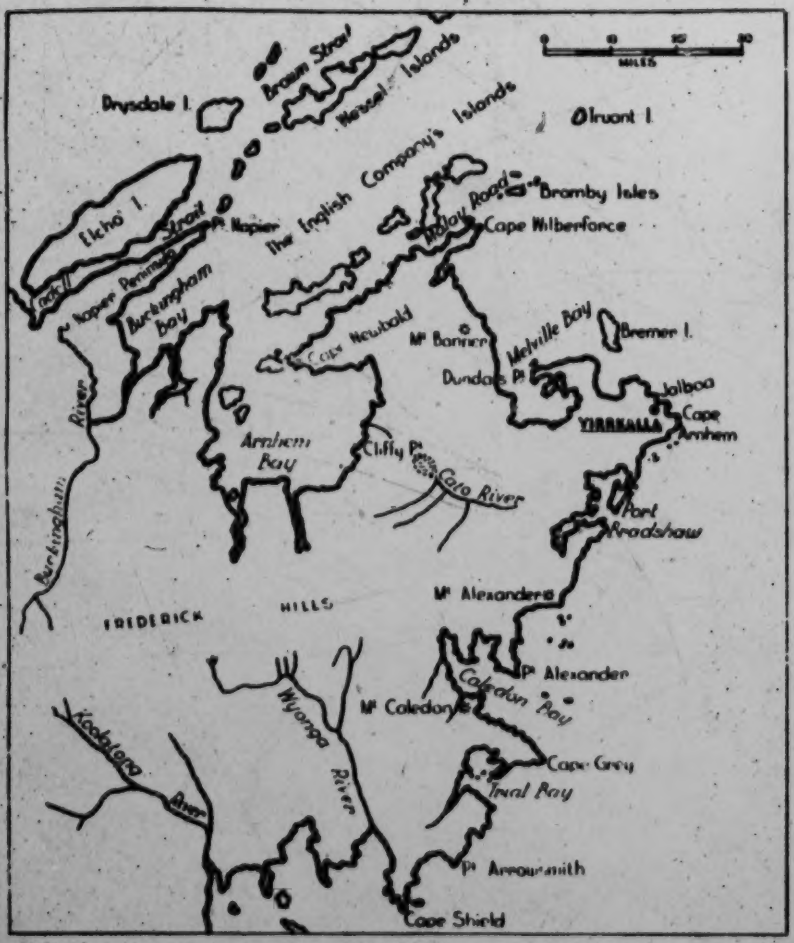


FIG. 57. Yirrkalla area

*773 776 184 The *Il'wualik* myth appears to belong more particularly to the western side of Arnhem Land, and the *Djunkgao* myth to the eastern. The former myth appears to be the more complete; in fact, in some localities the myth of *Djunkgao* actually takes on some of the elements of that of the *Il'wualik* sisters (p. 278). On the eastern side of Arnhem Land *Djunkgao* is a man; on the western side, two

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O117



women. In my collections of bark paintings there is, fortunately, a series dealing with the *Djunkgao* myth, which is associated with localities extending from Port Bradshaw, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, to Goulburn Island on the north coast. These paintings show a gradual shift from male to female dominance as the myth moves westward.

At Jelangbara, near Port Bradshaw, where *Djunkgao*[10] and his sister first landed, it was *Djunkgao* with his digging sticks who created most of the waterholes and topography, his sister being relatively unimportant. At Arnhem Bay[11] some thirty miles westward, although *Djunkgao* created the waterholes, he was under the dominance of his sister, *Madalait*. About fifty miles west of Arnhem Bay, and south of Elcho Island, is a sacred waterhole, Milmigarak, which was created by the *Djunkgao*, who by then had become two sisters, instead of brother and sister. Some elements of the *Waralik* myth are incorporated in this one.[12] In the *Djunkgao* myths of the Milingimbi area, recorded by Warner,[13] the *Djunkgao* are two important female ancestors who named the animals, plants and birds, and created many sacred waterholes.

As most of the bark paintings dealing with *Djunkgao* have separate myths, each painting will be described in association with the relevant myth.

### *Djunkgao and Madalait at Port Bradshaw*

The myths associated with this collection of bark paintings, carved figures and ceremonial objects deal with both the arrival of *Djunkgao* and his sister *Madalait* at Port Bradshaw[14] and the origin of some of the totemic designs of the *rivedjingu* language (*mata*) group associated with the *Djunkgao* at Port Bradshaw.

In early *bumun* (creation) times *Djunkgao*, his wife *Walo*, the sun-woman[15] their daughter, *Bara-bararinja* and *Madalait*, his sister, lived at Tjurinjina, a place far across the water to the east of Yirrkalla.[16]

One day *Djunkgao*, having decided to go on a journey to Port Bradshaw, set out in his bark canoe, taking his sister with him, but leaving his wife, the sun

10. Myth, p. 273. 11. Myth, p. 275. 12. Myth, p. 275.
13. Warner (1937), p. 336.
14. The carved figures and ceremonial objects are described in Part 3.
15. Berndt (1952), p. 3, states that the Djanggawul [*Djunkgao*] people were closely associated with the sun. One myth tells that the sun had two daughters who later became the *Djunkgao* sisters. In the myth of the sun, p. 502, which I collected in association with the relevant bark painting, Pl. 85F., the sun-woman, *Walo*, was the wife of *Djunkgao*. Their home was not at Purrlko (Berndt's Bralku or Bralgu), but at Tjurinjina, some distance beyond.
16. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 28, state that Djanggawul [Warner's and my *Djunkgao*], his two sisters, Maralait[j] [my *Madalait*] and Pibljuunreonju, and a companion, Beralberal, came from Bralku [Warner's and my Purrlko]. Later Berndt (1952), p. 2, corrects this statement and records that the party 'came from a far distant country, and on their way to the Arnhem Land mainland stopped at Bralgu [Purrlko], the *dua* moiety island of the dead.'

My aboriginal informants were definite that the *Djunkgao* party came, not from Purrlko, the *dua* 'heaven', but from Tjurinjina which, although it lies in the same general direction as Purrlko, is not the same place. This statement, and Berndt's later correction, are important because they dispose of the evidence that an important mythical ancestor originated in the home of the dead, evidence which might give rise to a theory that the aborigines of Yirrkalla believe in reincarnation.

### *The Totemic Place, Jalbon, of the Thunder-man, Tjambuwal*

About four miles north-west of Yirrkalla is a short headland, from the point of which a small reef extends into the sea. This headland, called Jalbon, is the totem place of the thunder-man, *Tjambuwal* (Fig. 57).

On its southern end the distorted rock strata of the cliff have formed into a number of more or less vertical irregular gutters which, according to the myth, are made when *Tjambuwal* urinates. On the point of the cliff about fifty yards to the north are the rocks which are shattered by *Tjambuwal* (Pl. 91E) when he strikes them with his club, *burununda*, and on its slopes a number of white stones, *milarik* (Pl. 91F). It is these, or the spirits of them, which *Tjambuwal* throws into the sky to make thunder-clouds.[69]

On the adjacent beach are two small casuarina trees (Pl. 91A), once the bodies of *Tjambuwal* and his relatives. Not far from these casuarinas is a large fig tree (Pl. 91B), the transformed body of another of *Tjambuwal's* relatives. The fruit of this fig tree is sacred, as indeed is the whole area at the base of the cliff. No one would dare to eat that fruit, for he would surely die, nor would he dig for ochre in the base of the cliff for, if he did, *Tjambuwal* would kill him. Should the women even look at the place where *Tjambuwal* urinated they must atone for their misdeeds by a gift of food to the members of the thunder-man's totem. If not, *Tjambuwal* will make them ill.

### *The Thunder-man, Bolugo (or Tjambuwal) at Wulwulwi, Koolatong River*

This version of the *Tjambuwal* myth places the totemic site at Wulwulwi, on the Koolatong River. The myth differs slightly in detail, but not in general form, from that at Yirrkalla: *Tjambuwal* becomes *Bolugo*;[70] the looped clouds, *wulma*, become *djalijal*; and *Bolugo* urinates from a high tree,[71] instead of, as in the *Tjambuwal* myth, from the clouds.[72]

On the middle panel of Pl. 89B is *Bolugo* urinating on the ground beneath. This urine later rises into the sky and becomes rain. There is a line of hailstones, *milarik* (shown as ovals) to the right of *Bolugo*, and looped clouds, *djalijal*, above his head. The series of squares[73] on either side of *Bolugo* symbolize the open sea near Wulwulwi.

### *The Thunder-man, Tjambuwal, at Naitjulma, Arnhem Bay*

When the thunder-man, *Tjambuwal*, was camped at Naitjulma, Arnhem Bay, two of his sons died and their bodies were transformed into white stones, called *milarik* or *jarambai*. At the beginning of the wet season the thunder-man throws

69. See bark paintings of *Bolugo* Pl. 89B.
70. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 11, refer to the thunder-man under the name of Bunggu.
71. See myth of Bolugo on coconut palm, p. 303. 72. See myth of *Tjambulwal*, p. 262.
73. This is the design belonging to the *dua tjapu mata* of Caledon Bay language group (Fig. 63A).



[text continues on p. 289]

at each end, their holes. Cross-hatched panels *f, f, f,* represent the paths made by the *ganjun* crabs as they ran from one hole to another.

The turtle track has now been transformed into a group of red and yellow sand hills and the holes of the *ganjun* crabs into low bushes.

### (2) THE CONCEPTION BELIEFS

Throughout the eastern side of Arnhem Land the aborigines believe the spirit child visits the father in a dream and asks to be directed to his future mother. The sources from which these children spring, however, vary with the different localities.

At Groote Eylandt, the children travel on the winds, those of the *nirirrikapara* moiety on the *mamariga* (south-east) wind,[9] and those of the *oranikapara* (equivalent to the *jiritja* on the mainland) on the *bara* (north-east) wind.[10] The little spirit child hides in the grass until it has an opportunity of visiting the father in a dream and asking him for a mother.

At Milingimbi, Warner[11] states, the spirit child, who has been living in the totemic well in the form of a small fish, asks the sleeping father the name of its mother. The father points her out, the child enters her body and starts life as a human being.

It was at Yirrkalla, however, that I was able to obtain, through the medium of the bark paintings, a more complete account of the conception beliefs.

#### (i) *The Conception Beliefs of the Dua Moiety of Yirrkalla*

The people of the *dua* moiety believe that when *Tjambuwal*, the thunderman, creates the rain clouds he places in them a number of spirit children, *jurtu*. These *jurtu*, who are so small that only the medicine-men can see them, descend on the raindrops to the land, or the sea. If on the land, the little *jurtu* enter one of the various *dua* yams, fruits, and especially the *dua jurapang* or *limuwar* wild honey; if the *jurtu* falls in the sea, it inhabits the *dua* fish or the green turtles. The little child spirits of *Tjambuwal* will not have anything to do with *jurtu* lands.

One day, as shown in the painting, two men catch a green turtle, bring it to the shore and cut it up so that everyone can have a meal. The cutting up of the turtle releases the *dua* spirit child living in its body. That night, when everyone is asleep, the spirit child, *jurtu*, visits one of the men in a dream and says:

'You are my father. *Tjambuwal* put me in the turtle you cut up today, so that I could find a mother. Where is she?'

The father points out one of his wives, whom he has been told has ceased menstruating; the child enters her body and starts a terrestrial existence. Next morning the father, if he remembers the dream (the aboriginal men said that it was not often that they did), says to his wife:

9. Myth of *mamariga* wind, Pl. 240.
10. Myth of *bara* wind, Pl. 248.
11. Warner (1937), p. 21.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7



184 616 842 532*

'Last night a *jurtu* came and asked me for a mother, so I sent it to you.' Within a short time the mother shows signs of pregnancy.

In the middle of Pl. 99B is *Tjambuwal*, holding the spirit child, *jurtu*, by the hand. Over his head are the boomerang-shaped clouds, *wulmu*. The groups of curving cross-hatched panels on the upper edge and the left-hand side of the painting are rain clouds, *b*, the home of the spirit child. On the right-hand side are two men spearing a turtle inhabited by a *jurtu* and on the left a pregnant woman. The curving cross-hatched lines at *a*, on the extreme right of the painting, represent the water disturbed by the wounded creature.

### (ii) *The Conception Beliefs of the Jiritja Moiety*

The conception beliefs of the *jiritja* moiety vary somewhat from those of the *dua*. They believe that when a woman ceases to menstruate her blood goes into the sky and is there changed into a spirit child, *jurtu*. After some time the little *jurtu*, desiring an earthly mother, creates a thunderstorm and a rainbow, and, using the raindrops as a vehicle of travel, descends to the earth. If the *jurtu* falls into the sea, it enters some *jiritja* creature such as a dugong, a hawksbill turtle or a queen fish; if on the land, a hive of *jiritja* honey, *kamon* or *barangit*, or the body of some *jiritja* creature. Should the aborigines spear a dugong and find that it is particularly fat, or locate a hive well stocked with honey, they know that the dugong or the hive is inhabited by a spirit child.

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When, for example, the dugong is cut open, and the *jurtu* escapes, it visits the sleeping father and asks him which of his wives is to be his mother. As with the *dua* moiety, the father points out a wife who has ceased menstruating. The child enters her body through the vulva. If the father remembers next morning he tells the expectant mother about his dream. Soon afterwards the woman feels the movements of the *jurtu* within her body. As soon as a woman ceases to menstruate, she must not eat meat or fish. Her diet is limited to grass-seeds, yams, the fruit of the cycad, shell-fish and crabs.

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[843 262]

On Pl. 98C the father and pregnant mother are at the upper edge of the painting. On either side of them are large thunder-clouds created by the spirit child, *jurtu*. On the right of the painting is falling rain, parallel lines of cross hatching, and on the extreme left two dugongs; the cross hatching around them is the sea. The U-shaped symbol is a rainbow created by the little *jurtu*, at the base of which is one who has descended on the raindrops. He is swimming about in the sea, waiting for an opportunity to enter the body of one of the dugongs which, he hopes, will be captured by the men in the canoe.[12] The artist explained that he had made a mistake by not allowing himself enough room to paint the dugong in the canoe with the spirit child inside of it. So he painted the *jurtu* only.

12. The *jurtu*, like the *muri* of the Adnjamatana tribe of the northern Flinders Ranges of South Australia, are, before they enter the mother, complete, self-directing beings. Mountford and Harvey (1941), p. 150.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Ol17 Muragin Ol17



Three *dua* men, *h*, *h*, *h*, and two *jiritja* men, *j*, *j*, are performing the totemic dances of the dead man, the cross-hatching between the figures symbolizing the dust rising from under their feet. At *g* is a *dua* woman ready to take the skeleton apart, and at *m* a *jiritja* woman waiting with the bark coffin.

Plate 100B deals with the third and final stage of burial, the transference of the bones from the bark to the log coffin.[25] In panel *a* there are two *dua* log coffins and one *jiritja*, the *jiritja* being in the middle. In the left of panel *b* are two bark coffins, the left-hand one containing the bones of a *jiritja* man and the right-hand one the bones of a *dua* man.[26] The cross-hatched panels on both sides of the coffins are the forked sticks of the burial platform, and the vertical panel *c* the framework. The various performers in the ceremony are depicted in panels *d*, *e*, *f* and *g*, each group holding their hands and arms in a manner peculiar to their moiety and sex.

Thus, in panel *e* the *jiritja* women are dancing with their hands held at waist level, and on panel *f*, the *dua* women, with their knuckles held tightly against their heads. On panel *g*, the *dua* men are holding both hands above their heads, and at *d* the *jiritja* men have one hand held high and the other at waist level. In the right of panel *b*, two men are providing music for the dancers, the *jiritja* (right) blowing the drone tube and the *dua* (left) singing and beating his music sticks.

Plate 101D is divided into seven panels, each picturing some phase of the second, third or fourth stages of the ceremonies.

In panel *a* (lower right), the dead man, the central figure, is being lifted from the burial platform by four aborigines, two on each side. The small figure at the feet of the corpse represents one of the wives whose duty it is to clean the bones. In the next panel, *b*, one man is blowing the drone tube, and to the right of him another is singing and beating his music sticks together. The central figure of this panel is a woman wrapping the bones in paper-bark to remove the smell before they are placed in the temporary bark coffin. The four figures on the right are women performing the burial dance. On panel *c* (lower left) are six more dancing women.

The upper left panel, *d*, shows the bones, now encased in the temporary bark coffin, being passed to the mother, or the wife, of the deceased (central position). On the lower edge of the same panel, reading from the left, is a drone-tube player, one man beating his music sticks and singing and five women dancing. The two lines of men on the upper edge are performing a totemic dance at the same time as the bark coffin is being handed to the woman. The remaining panels depict the final disposal of the bones in the log coffin. In *e* are seven men and the log coffin containing the bones, whilst in panel *f* the women are dancing. Some men are playing the drone tube in panel *g*, others are beating the music

25. See bark coffin, Yirrkalla, Pl. 102E, D, and Milingimbi, Pl. 103B, C.

26. This painting suggests that on some occasions the bones of the members of both moieties are transferred to their respective log coffins at the same time.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 CR17 Murngin CR17



represent the mouth and teeth of an unknown mythical monster. There was no explanation for the fish designs on the lower right.

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*Fresh-water Fish, Kwiwarina*

Plate 105C, D belongs to a member of the fresh-water fish, *kwiwarina*, totem of the *dua* moiety, whose totemic place is on the Glyde River. The more or less triangular designs, upper left, represent huts, called *anubit*, and the oval designs on the other panels, women's carrying-baskets. The dots on the edge of the baskets symbolize the mythical fresh-water fish, *kwiwarina*, and the cross-hatching female, smaller fish. As in A, the holes are the 'eyes' of the cadus, and the prongs the teeth and jaws of some unidentified monster.

*Unidentified Totem*

Plate 105A, B is a cadus of an unidentified totem from Milingimbi. In the upper central panel, A, the bird is an emu, and the pear-shaped designs, yams. Three large fresh-water fish occupy the upper right. Below them is a cat-fish, *kingding* (distinguished by the tentacles from the mouth and the lack of fins), and near the head of the cat-fish, a diamond fish. Three king-fish, *jungala*, are shown in the lower left panel, and three cat-fish, *kingding*, in the lower central panel.

(c) THE JOURNEY OF THE DEAD SPIRIT AND ITS ARRIVAL

When the log cadus has been placed in its final position and the people have returned to their camps, the spirits of the dead leave their bones, and according to their moiety, travel to their respective 'heaven'. In these 'heavens' there is always pleasant weather and ample food. Everyone is happy, because each spirit on its arrival, whatever its previous disposition, is changed into a person of equable temperament and good health. All day long the spirits may bask in the sun, talking to old friends about their mutual experiences when on earth together, and every evening they perform their favourite ceremonies and sing their favourite songs. Many of the spirit people, however, amuse themselves by going out in their canoes to hunt the sea-creatures for food.[40]

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Although the *dua* and *jiritja* myths of the journey of the spirit to the land of the dead have many points of resemblance, the destinations are different, the *dua* spirits travelling east to Purelku,[41] an island near the sunrise, and the *jiritja* to Nalkuna,[42] a land to the north, where in addition to the usual

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40. See *dua* myths, *Turi turi*, p. 209, and *Bulu bulu*, p. 132; also *jiritja* myth of Kulkuna, p. 329, the Mudud and the dugong, p. 315.

41. Warner (1937), p. 321, tells an interesting myth of the journey of a mortal man to Purelku.

42. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 54, record that Bulu (Melgrave Island in the Tomkinson Straits) is the *jiritja* home of the dead. My Yirrkalla *jiritja* informants said that Nalkuna, their 'heaven', is to the north. It would appear, however, from the myth associated with the carved figure of *Jimdjarawul* (Pl. 139), fn. p. 411, that the *jiritja* groups at Arnhem Bay have a different 'heaven' from that of the aborigines of Yirrkalla.

[184]



[text continues on p. 325]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17



after another. At first the spears penetrate deeply into his flesh, but after a while it becomes so hard and tough that the spears cannot even pierce the skin.[47] While this is going on, the women sit on the ground and wail in sympathy for the sufferings of the new spirit.

This ordeal over, the men of Purelko take the new spirit to their camp, tell him that he has passed his initiation, teach him many new songs and dances and invite him to join in their ceremonies.

The method of entry of the spirit of a woman is somewhat different. When the masked plover, *berrk-berrk*, announces the arrival of a new spirit and the head man, *Jaualin-wuru*, finds out that it is a woman, he sends a small child along the track which leads from the beach to Purelko, telling it to find its mother and bring her to him. *Jaualin-wuru* always camps on that track so that no one can reach Purelko without being properly prepared. After *Jaualin-wuru* has met the new arrival and, if necessary, transformed her into a young woman in good health, she stays in his camp until she is pregnant. She is then admitted to Purelko where, after a short and painless period of gestation, she gives birth to her child. The idea behind this belief is that a woman, who must be perfect to enter Purelko, has to show that she is capable of bearing a child.

Two women, *Dunjun-jina* and *Mitjuna*, live at Purelko and keep the morning star, *barnumbir*, in a string bag, guarding it jealously all the day and most of the night, lest it should escape. A little before dawn, *Jaualin-wuru*, the head man of Purelko, says to the women: 'It's time that you let the morning star out of that bag so that it can visit the *dua* camps on earth both to wake up the men, women and children and to give them the messages from the dead.'

The woman *Mitjuna* objects strongly to this suggestion, because she is afraid that she might lose *barnumbir*, but *Jaualin-wuru* overrules her, and releases the morning star, which is already struggling to get out of the bag to perform its allotted tasks.[48] At first *barnumbir* rests on the top of a tall pandanus tree from which it can see a long distance. This causes the women to cry out in fear that they might lose the star, and to ask that it be returned to them. To pacify the women *Jaualin-wuru* pulls the morning star back again, it is on a string—and puts it in the bag. But, though the women are pleased, *Jaualin-wuru* thinks of the aborigines on earth waiting for their messages. So he opens the bag again and allows *barnumbir* to escape. For a while the morning star dances along the surface of the water, but soon climbs rapidly into the sky. It visits each *dua* place in turn,[49] wakes the aborigines and then gives them messages from their relatives and friends at Purelko. Just as dawn is breaking *Jaualin-wuru* takes hold of the

47. The body is speared when it is taken from the burial platform, p. 312. Warner (1937), p. 113, refers to the same practice. All the male spirits have to pass through this initiation ritual at Purelko. There are different rituals for the women, p. 326. There are no such ordeals in the *purpa* heaven, Nalkuna.

48. The *dua* moiety of Milingimbi have a similar belief. Myth, p. 328.

49. See p. 327 for the list of *dua* localities.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragin OII7

## THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

### (8) The Art of Milingimbi

The Rev. Arthur F. Ellemor made a small collection of Milingimbi bark paintings for the expedition, together with simple but incomplete interpretations. This collection was valuable because it shows that the art of Milingimbi, on the west of north-eastern Arnhem Land, and that of Yirrkalla on the east, are similar both in design and mythological content.

#### *The Wild Honey, Koko*

The honey of the stingless bee is one of the few sweet foods in the aborigines' menu. Many hours are spent searching for this food and a great deal of labour expended climbing the trees and cutting out the hives. Four bark paintings[66] were collected dealing with the mythical wild-honey ancestors of Milingimbi.

Plate 125C is associated with a mythical wild-honey woman, called *Birikura*, whose camp was on the mainland south of Elcho Island. This site is a totemic place of the wild honey, *koko*. The painting is a conventionalized representation of a hive of wild bees, the projection from the upper edge being the 'nose' or entrance to the hive, and the central disc, the beeswax. The cross-hatched diamond-shaped patterns covering the bulk of the painting represent the honey combs, the white lines forming the margins of the various cells, the beeswax, and the dotted diamonds the eggs and young bees in the nursery cells.

Plate 125A is another painting of a hive of wild honey. The symbolism is similar to that in C, except that the artist has shown four entrances to the hive.

Plate 125D pictures *koko*'s totemic place at Murnarambul, near Arnhem Bay. The three transverse panels, *a*, *a*, *a*, and the vertical cross-hatched one, *b*, refer to logs lying on the ground near Murnarambul, in which there are hives of wild bees. Within the design made by these four logs are hives of wild bees. These hives are pictured with the same symbols as those in A and C, the two long triangular projections at the top of the painting being entrances to the hive.

Plate 125B is another painting of a hive of wild bees, using the traditional symbolism to show the wax, honey, eggs and young bees. The long rectangular design in the middle of the bark painting is a hollow tree in which there is a hive of bees, the honey and comb. The hive is again shown at the bottom of the central panel. The entrance or nose of the hive is a long tapering design at the top. The side panels illustrate two more hives.

#### *Mimala, the Fresh-water Tortoise*

Plate 126A pictures a forest area near Arnhem Bay, called Jaraga, the totem place of the mythical fresh-water tortoise, *mimala*.[67] Three of these tortoises are shown at the top of the painting, the designs on each carapace representing the water-grass often growing on the backs of these creatures. The three dark-coloured vertical lines, *a*, *a*, *a*, are logs and the four panels of diamond-shaped

66. These designs are similar to those of the *dalwanga mata*, Fig. 61f.

67. *Mimala*, the fresh water tortoise, is also pictured on an engraved smoking pipe, Fig. 103b; on a painted coffin, Pl. 105B; and on another bark painting, Pl. 119A.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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131 from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt,
797 and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island. Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

136 The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, par-
262 ticularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish, crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

*b Social Organization:*

114 Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline
184 briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while
121 the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present
177 purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to
101 Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may
614 be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people.
197 The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)
616

1. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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tion of the people further east, around Yirrkalla, Cape Arnhem and Caledon Bay.

It was not until perhaps fifteen years ago that the cult gradually spread northwards from Rose River, where its custodians were the Nunggubuiju group who had obtained it from the Roper River people, particularly from the Mangarei-Ma:ra-Alawa tribes. The Lultma'rangu (*dua* moiety), Dalwongu and Mararba (*jiritja* moiety) linguistic groups were the first to come within its influence; they mixed with people from Rose River to perform Kunapipi ceremonies around Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, and occasional Kunapipi rituals were held round about Yirrkalla.

But although these people did perform the Kunapipi at relevant seasons, this did not take the place of indigenous religious belief and practice. The great ceremonies of the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara* were still the most important; and the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals, associated with the two Wauwalak Sisters and the Rock Pythons, retained their importance in the minds of the north-eastern people. Kunapipi in this area was subsidiary, whereas in most of the other areas mentioned above her rituals held a paramount position.

The introduced Kunapipi cult brought with it all its attendant ritual and ceremonial activity, but apparently its original mythology (see Chapters IX and X) became merged with that of the Wauwalak.[6] It was, in consequence, more readily accepted by the local people, for the Wauwalak myth-cycle embraces much of the indigenous religion. Thus, instead of becoming just another introduced ceremony, the Kunapipi became a cult associated with a series of cults, having roots in indigenous mythology. The Wauwalak mythology had much in common with that of the southern Kunapipi. Both possessed the same concept of fertility. The Wauwalak sisters became indirectly the dual Mothers, continually replenishing the earth with human beings and with the natural species. Even the Rainbow Snake was presnt, i e the form of the Rock Pythons, who finally swallowed the Sisters. Fundamentally, too, the arrangement of the sacred dancing ground, and much of the incidental ceremony (when the special Kunapipi objects are not used) are similar to those of the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals.

One aspect of the Kunapipi is slightly at variance with local indigenous belief. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the Fertility Mothers are the sisters of Djanggawul, Pildjiwuraroiju and Miralaitj. The Wauwalak, although associated with the idea of fertility, are not concerned with human or animal creation: they are said to be the daughters of the elder Djanggawul sister, removed from her uterus by her Brother. According to conventional Kunapipi mythology,

6. The Wauwalak mythology itself was introduced much earlier into north-eastern Arnhem Land, its original source being found in the mythology of the Kunapipi: *vide* Chapters IX and X.

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184 the Mother (or Mothers), represented quite often by Two Sisters
773 even in central-western Northern Territory, is the creative Being;
776 so from this point of view the Wauwalak cycle, now substantiating
794 the introduced Kunapipi, should possess Two Sisters who are themselves creative Beings. Local belief however accords this status only to the Djanggawul; but since the Wauwalak are their daughters, the original doctrine is not greatly inconvenieneed. The creative Mothers may still be the Djanggawul, making their appearance through the Wauwalak Sisters, while the Wauwalak themselves are the Mungamunga of the south.

773 The actual meaning of the name Kunapipi is not easy to discover.
794 The cult itself, with its relevant ceremonies, and the myth that substantiates the ritual, is Kunapipi, and this, in most areas mentioned
796 above, is translated as the "Mother", or "Old Woman". The term "old" in this context signifies status and age, although not elderly appearance. Dr. Warner[7] notes that Kunapipi (spelt "Gunabibi") is
[114] one name of the Pythons which swallowed the Wauwalak; but, as mentioned above, this writer stresses the importance of the Snakes at the expense of the Fertility Mothers, and this element is by far the most apparent in north-eastern Arnhem Land religion.

192 At Yirrkalla, the name Kunapipi is said to have two meanings.
364 First, the word Kunapipi means "whistle-cock" (that is, a sub-
83 incisure); for these ceremonies came up from the Rose and the
[171] Roper Rivers where subincision is general, whereas throughout the greater part of north-eastern Arnhem Land only circumcision is practised. The ceremonies of Kunapipi in the Yirrkalla region may also be termed *wiri:i* or *wira'i*, meaning "incisure". But Kunapipi means also the uterus of the Mother. That is, the incised penis symbolizes the snake (Python or Rainbow Snake), and the incisure itself the uterus. Symbolically, then, the subincised male member represents both the female and the male organs, essential in the process of fructification.

More generally, however, the term Kunapipi is said to mean the Mother, and in isolated cases the Snake, both being accepted versions. It is because Kunapipi is translated as Fertility Mother, through the greater part of the Northern Territory, that we have preferred to use that appellation.

794 A number of ceremonies throughout the northern half of the
796 Northern Territory are associated with Fertility Mothers and Rain-
184 bow (or Great) Snakes; and it is possible that the majority of these cults are linked with one another, even if their outward expressions are dissimilar. This aspect requires intensive study, including the collection of mythological texts, and analysis of relevant ritual and songs. The Kunapipi cult, however, consists of certain distinctive elements, that are found throughout the areas we have mentioned.

7. L. Warner, *op. cit*, p. 294.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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For example, the Kunapipi held at Yirrkalla is essentially similar to that held at Birrundudu (towards the Western Australian border in central-western Northern Territory). There is the spasmodic use of bullrourers; the sacred ground itself is the uterus of the Mother; a sacred well (*nanggaru*) is dug on the dancing ground; a crescent-shaped trench (*kanala*) is made later; *jelmalandji* "posts" are erected, immense structures symbolizing the Pythons; there is the exchange of wives and gifts, with ceremonial intercourse; and the forked posts, called the *djepalmandji*, are used towards the termination of the rituals. These are features of all Kunapipi, Kalwadi and Kadjari ceremonies.

A word may be said too of the songs that are used in the Yirrkalla-Rose River Kunapipi Cycle.[8] These are mostly of the short conventional type common throughout most of Aboriginal Australia,[9] and their words serve as "key" patterns suggesting and inferring ideas, rather than providing detailed description. This form of song structure is, like the Kunapipi, alien to north-eastern Arnhem Land, where usually songs are very lengthy, description is detailed and repetitious, and separate cycles contain several hundreds of songs (or verses). Secular and magico-religious *tjaruda* love songs, which are often associated incidentally with the sacred Kunapipi (for they are sometimes connected with the Mungamunga), have also found their way up through Rose River to north-east Arnhem Land, and have retained their own song-structure against much local opposition from semi-indigenous forms.[10]

The major theme in all Kunapipi ritual is the natural cycle of reproduction and fertility. Fertility, as expressed in reproduction, seasonal fluctuation, periods of plenty and scarcity, is symbolized in the ceremonies associated with animals, birds and plants, their mating, copulating and bearing offspring in their proper seasons. The essential factor of mating and copulating, as a step towards reproduction, is crystallized in ceremonial copulation on the sacred ground. And ever present, "eternally" watchful and omnipotent, is the Great Mother, the essence of fecundity, in whose divine power rests the strength to animate and increase both human beings and the natural species. The performance of rituals attracts her interest, and brings into motion her protecting influence, which ensures a continuation of the world that her neophytes know, and the unbroken sequence of the seasons upon which they depend for their livelihood.

8. *Vide* Chapters VII and VIII of this work.
9. R. Berndt, A Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 16-50.
10. *Vide* R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*. In this work a Rose River Love Song Cycle and the *tjaruda* are detailed and discussed.

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CHAPTER III

# MYTHOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE KUNAPIPI

773 The myth that substantiates Kunapipi ritual in this north-eastern
776 region is thus concerned with the two Wauwalak sisters; and this
794 same myth (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) serves to explain two other
[561] indigenous rituals, the age-grading *djunggawon* ceremony, and the "higher" religious ritual of *ngu:rlmak*. Each of these three ceremonies, the *djunggawon*, the *kunapipi* and the *ngu:rlmak*, emphasizes some particular feature of this myth. But at the same time, to understand thoroughly the Kunapipi ritual and symbolism it is necessary to be acquainted with the complete Wauwalak myth. Even then, certain aspects must be interpreted, according to Aboriginal explanations, before their meaning can become apparent. Traditional symbolism in ritual, through long years of constant repetition, becomes so stylized that the original intent is sometimes obscured; it is often necessary, therefore, to interpret on the basis not only of mythology, but also of comparison with similar actions and symbols in other regions. However, in this small study we are concerned not so much with theoretical analysis, as with recording the structure and basis of the cult in this particular area, assisted by a glance at its expression in two neighbouring groups.

[616] In north-eastern Arnhem Land, where most of the indigenous
[184] religious doctrine is expressed through the Djanggawul *dua* and the Laintjung-Banaitja *jiritja* cycles, the Wauwalak series is not the most important. Again, to understand fully the importance of this concept of fertility it is necessary to realize the place of the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters in Yirrkalla sacred life, for they were responsible in the first place for the birth of the Wauwalak. The power of fructification, however, has been transmitted to the Two Wauwalak Sisters (*vide* Chapters I and II) with the introduction of the Kunapipi.

562 It is relevant to mention, in this context, that women play an
794 important part in all sacred ritual in north-eastern Arnhem Land,
796 where many of the rites are concerned with the reproductive function
773 of womankind, and of female Ancestral (or Spirit) Beings. Women to-day are acquainted, although in many cases somewhat imperfectly, with the background of sacred ceremony and the underlying doctrines. Indeed, men stress the fact that in the Dreaming Period women initially possessed all sacred ritual, and lost it only through

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1 is the billabong or sacred well, Muruwul, also called Mernaninja, Mainbunu:ru and Tamalanungomi. In its waters is the Julunggul watching the Wauwalak (2); *a* the young sister, *b* the elder sister and child. 3 is another Lightning Snake (python), who smells the blood at 1 (Muruwul) and goes back to 4; then it comes round to 5. 532 773

6 is the female Julunggul, while 7 shows the male (*a*) and female (*b*) Snakes who are "after" the Wauwalak. (Here, an important variation occurs: two Julunggul, a male and a female, are said to be "after" the Wauwalak, whereas in the first version the male Python is said to play only a subsidiary part, and the female is the one who takes the initiative.) [184]

The Two Sisters (2) hear the noise made by the Snakes. They leave the elder sister's child in their camp, *murlk* (8), and begin to dance, circling around, trying to stop the Julungguls' progress; 12 represents their dancing.

The drawing then returns to an earlier scene. All the food they have caught has "made itself bird", and flown away to the sacred well (1). The younger sister asks the older, "Look, what are we going to have now? All our food has flown away". They look back towards 9, and see all the young snakes coming in their direction (the Sisters are now at 8): they had thought this camp was free from snakes, but now they are everywhere.

Then they see the two big Julunggul (7 *a* and *b*) circling around, and it begins to rain, for the female snake has made rain at Muruwul (1). And while the older sister goes out for stringy bark to make their *murlk* weatherproof, the Julunggul sneaks through the rain; the younger sister has remained to look after the child.

Now while the other sister is out gathering bark, at 10, she goes over to the billabong for drinking water; as she drinks, her afterbirth blood falls into the water and is carried down to where the Julunggul live. It is from this that the Snakes smell the blood, and emerge. (The sequence of events is slightly confused, and should apparently conform to the first version.) The sister returns along a road (11) which shows her footprints. The two complete the hut (8) and enter it; now it is growing dark, and they sleep.

While the Sisters and child sleep, the Julunggul sends a "signal": that is, lightning from Muruwul. The younger sister feels this: she awakens and looks through the doorway. She sees the vivid flashes of lightning and is frightened; returning to her sister, she says: "You wake up, sister, there's something coming along, they can smell us".

Then they both dance around, 12, as women do now in the main camp, in order to keep away the Julunggul. When they can dance no longer, they return to their hut. In the meantime the two Julunggul (7) have been sneaking towards the women; the other snakes (9) "only take *mala* for the big Julunggul" (that is, they belong to the

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773 When these people had completed the *jelmalandji* emblem, they
796 held another meeting "to think about the Wauwalak". "What are
[778] we going to do about the blood of those two women?" they asked one another.

The most important ceremonial headman, named Nga:ti (that is, termite, sometimes called "meat" ant, who was responsible for revivifying the Wauwalak), stood up; grasping the blade of his stone-spear, he cut his arm and let the blood flow out. "We make ourselves like those two women", he said.

[785] Then other men got up; while some cut a vein inside the elbow, others cut the inner part of their forearm above the wrist, and all tied ligatures about their upper arms. This is a substitute for re-opening the penis incisure to obtain a flow of blood similar to that of the Mother Kunapipi: it should be remembered that a great deal of the original Kunapipi ritual concerns subincising groups.

As they let the blood flow they said, "Ah, very good: that is the blood of the 'Spring' Women (that is, afterbirth blood and the menstruation)".

773 "And what shall we do for the Snake's 'shout' (that is, the sound
778 made by the Julunggul)?" they asked.
796 They built another *jelmalandji*, larger than the first, to represent the Julunggul who swallowed the Wauwalak. They smeared arm blood all over its surface, and on to it fastened wild cotton (or white feather down) to form a pattern symbolizing the Snake. "But it makes no sound", they said. "It is not like the Julunggul of the *djunggawon*, that when blown makes the sound of the Snake; nor is it like the great *unar* which 'cries out' when beaten. What shall we do?"

[534] So they took a clean piece of wood, from the tree which the Julunggul had split by lightning (see previous chapter), and marked it with the Snake design. They obtained human hair cord, and threaded it through the hole they had bored at one end of the wooden slab. When they swung this object (the bullroarer), they could hear the sound of the Julunggul: "this is the different shout, for the Kunapipi side".

773 In this case, too, contrary information exists: and this bullroarer
778 for use in the Kunapipi is sometimes said to be the voice of Lu'ningu.
796 Its sound then is a "little bit low", spasmodic and quick, for this
184 Snake was full from having eaten so many young men, and he was tired. In the *ngu:rlmak* side, the sound of the bullroarer is longer and heavier, for the Julunggul had eaten only the Wauwalak and the child. In the eastern *ngu:rlmak* rituals, however, the bullroarer is not used, being reserved solely for the Kunapipi. Such confusion in the identification of fundamental ritual objects is not unusual in Aboriginal religion; and for our purpose here it is preferable perhaps to conform to the original version, in which the bullroarer is said to be

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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the voice of Julunggul.[2] At the same time, however, the Lu'ningu Snake plays an important part in purely male sacred life.

The whole problem of interpretation depends on the distribution of the Wauwalak ritual among the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngu:rlmak*. For example, the first is a re-enactment of the swallowing of the Two Sisters by Julunggul, and the performance of totemic ceremonies relevant to the animals caught by the women for food. The second concerns the swallowing of the young men, the presence of Julunggul after the swallowing of the Wauwalak, and a number of dances relating to copulation and procreation, stressing the theme of fertility. The third and final ceremonial sequence deals principally with the *murlk* shade, and with other Snakes including the Julunggul. All these rituals to some extent overlap, and the whole myth may be enacted to create a framework for specific aspects.

In the *djunggawon* the Python is called Julunggul and swallows the Wauwalak. In the Kunapipi it is usually known as Moiit, and in addition to swallowing the young men, and disgorging and re-swallowing the Wauwalak, is said to have swallowed the Nga:ti; but this is not substantiated by relevant mythology, and appears to be a Rose River addition. In the *ngu:rlmak*, the same Snake is known as *uwar*. As Julunggul is the commonest sacred term for the Python, it has been retained throughout this work, although some alternatives have been used.

In the Kunapipi, male neophytes leaving the main camp for the sacred ground are said to be swallowed by Lu'ningu, just as he swallowed the young men in the Dreaming Era; and in the old days they had to stop away from womenfolk from a period of two weeks to two months, symbolizing their stay inside the belly of the Snake. When the period of ceremonies is finished they return as new men (for Lu'ningu vomited up the young men dead). In the *djunggawon* the sacred ritual is associated more with women, because of the Wauwalak, and the novices may be seen constantly: "for those Wauwalak were vomited quickly, and were soon alive".

It is the practice, in the Kunapipi, to send messengers in all directions, notifying various groups that a ceremony is to take place. Young male postulants are also sent with their guardians, and their going symbolizes "vomiting". That is, in leaving their home camp and going to another some distance away, they are being vomited through the air to the strange place by Lu'ningu (in other versions, by Julunggul). And when they eventually return, together with alien groups who are to attend the Kunapipi ceremony, they are swallowed again "just as the Wauwalak were", or like the young men in the

2. In regions where the Kunapipi is more or less indigenous, the sound of the bullroarer is the Fertility Mother's voice, and the object itself symbolizes her uterus. *Vide* Chapters IX–XI. In other areas, the bullroarer represents the penis, and its symbolism depends sometimes on its shape and sound.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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773 tence and immutability of the "eternal" Beings, a religious philos-
796 ophy has been developed among the mature "thinkers" of the group.
796 This finds its outlet in the mental exercise of meditation, interpre-
789 tation, and explanation, but is nevertheless restricted by the deep
794 faith that is a living part of all its manifestations. Within the limita-
tion of defined premises, a certain degree of flexibility is apparent; philosophic concepts have not remained static, nor ideology stagnant. Throughout the centuries of religious development, alien ideas
[177] have been considered and discussed, even when they were unorthodox, and apparently opposed to indigenous theology. They have been accepted or discarded; but all have, in this way, served to illuminate and extend the basic principles which serve to explain to the aborigines man's place in his environment, and his inter-relationship with the "Divine" Beings who are possessed of the power of animation and are the seat of knowledge.

796 Several interesting points are raised in our description of Kunapipi ritual.

In all Kunapipi ceremonies, throughout the whole region mentioned in Chapter II, basic words referring to the sacred objects, ceremonies, and so on, are very much the same; for instance, *nanggaru*, *kamala*, *jelmalandji*, *djamala*, *gumagu*, and *djepalmandji*.
[184] These terms serve as a connecting link, for their meanings do not change drastically from one area to another, even when, as at Yirrkalla, the Kunapipi ritual itself has been superimposed on a relatively indigenous theme. The dominating theory behind the Kunapipi has preserved, more or less intact, its original intent.

562 Another outstanding aspect is the important rôle undertaken by
796 women throughout the performance of the Kunapipi ceremonies. At no time do they feel themselves secluded from purely male activity, while at intervals they take an active part. They know that the rituals are principally concerned with peculiarly feminine functions, and that men are carrying out the more strenuous features of ceremonial life. "These rituals," said one informant, "are just like a man copulating with a woman, he does all the hard working so that the woman can carry out the really important business of childbirth." This may be a one-sided attitude, but it does adequately express local native reasoning in this matter. The question of whether women are profane, as opposed to the aura of sacredness pervading a male participant at such a ceremony, does not enter into Yirrkalla thinking. Even when ritually tabu because of afterbirth or
[841] menstruation blood (as in the case of the Wauwalak at the sacred Muruwul billabong), a woman is regarded as sacred, for her blood and her other activities themselves are sacred, and are focal points in the religious doctrine. And all sacred ceremony, these aborigines
[773] say, was inspired by women. "In the beginning men had nothing, and women possessed all the ritual; so men stole this from the women ..." — (Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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. . ." — (Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology). In any case, a cult such as the Kunapipi, which stresses fertility and reproduction, could not exclude women; as is normal in these matters, a certain sphere of ceremonial activity is allotted to each sex, while the women realize the important part played by their divine counterpart, the Wauwalak.

In the Kunapipi, however, women enter the sacred ground of the men; this is a feature that rarely occurs in the ceremonies associated with other cults. Upon entering the ground, the women themselves become more definitely *marelin* (sacred); "they take over from the men, and dance before them as if the men were only novices being introduced to their first sacred rituals". They re-enact something of what they themselves initially possessed in the mythological period, and what was stolen by the men. They use the sacred symbol of Julunggul, and the tree that was split by his lightning, and through their actions they represent the origin of the men's sacred bullroarer which no woman is supposed to see. They dance the ritual of the great Python, "and the men hang their heads in fear".[17]

On the termination of this ceremony, the women dance the lewd bandicoot dance on the sacred ground before the men, expressing symbolically the basic intent of the Kunapipi. They are stimulating both themselves and the men in order to carry out sexual intercourse, for copulation is the means by which fertility is achieved.

This brings us to an aspect that cannot be considered in detail here; that is, the problem of religious sexuality.[18] By this we mean the degree in which sex, as a stimulatory factor, enters into Kunapipi ritual. In most sacred aboriginal cult life, where sexual subjects are dealt with frankly and freely, there is no suggestion of actual individual stimulation, or of arousing the sexual inclinations of the participants: the ritual merely re-enacts some specific aspect of mythology which is related to erotic activity or coitus, and which is necessary for its effective completion, and for achieving the desired intent. The actors only carry out the symbolism associated with sexual activity. The arousing of sexual desire by sacred acting of this type would project into it a profane and irreligious content that would immediately detract from its real intent. Allowance for sexual stimulation by dancing, acting and singing has been made in the case of love magic ritual, or of collective male and female secular ceremonies that heighten sexual feelings and permit licence.

17. This ceremony held by the women is similar to their secret magico-religious rituals in central-western Northern Territory. It is one aspect of the *Ijaruda*, which has its sacred and secular expressions. From these secret rituals of the women, men are traditionally, and in present practice, excluded. *Vide* C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, Cahiers d'Ethnologie, de Geographie et de Linguistique, 1, Paris, 1950, pp. 1-85, text figs. See particularly Chapter V.

18. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section XII.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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songs express what may be described as the spiritual quality of this particular Aboriginal society. They are essentially traditional, and have developed within the society as the result of group rather than of conscious or acknowledged individual effort. The individual is thus subordinated to the social conscience, in that he becomes the instrument through which they are transmitted, and through which they continue to live. The fact that he may add something to them in the course of transmission is not, here, a significant factor in this process: for if their inherent 'power', or their sacred aura, is to remain, they must retain what is felt to be their original structure in recognizable form. In this lies their essential value as documents of social thought and religious belief. Being predominantly traditional, they stem from the past; and because the concept of the 'Eternal Dreaming' is a living reality in Aboriginal life, these songs continue to retain at least the main ingredients (or what people themselves regard as the main ingredients) of their original content. Moreover, their oral transmission has been associated with special rhythms and ritual postures, and with accompanying dances, providing means of expression for the sacred thought and emotion not merely of one but indeed of many generations of Aborigines.

The Djanggawul songs and mythology comprise a body of knowledge which is not restricted, in the sense of being available to only one section of the community, but is shared by all adults and (to a much lesser extent) children. For practical purposes, a distinction is made between, on the one hand, the executive authority wielded by the men, and on the other, the more submissive participation of the women. Women know the content and rhythms of the songs, but 'officially' they are not supposed to know the ritual or the sacred invocations, or to see the *rangga* emblems. Generally speaking, however, they do know more about these than would be suspected from conversations with men alone. A number of women have described to my wife, in confidence, various features of the rituals performed exclusively and 'secretly' by men. They have described the *rangga* emblems, and told her many of the sacred terms used in invoking. An explanation of this lies in the Aborigines' concept of sacredness, which is not restricted to the confines of the ceremonial ground. It is, on the contrary, widely diffused throughout the society, and appears to permeate every institution and activity of the people. Women, as we have seen, by virtue of their childbearing ability as symbolized by the womb, possess a special sacred quality peculiar to themselves, in which men may not share. However important man may be—and the indispensable part he plays in conception receives much attention in the Djanggawul epic—woman has the more spectacular

## *Epilogue*

rôle, and the miracle of childbirth is hers alone. Upon that simple but fundamental thesis much of this traditional epic is based.

Woman's participation in the *dua nara* is thus both logical and necessary. Each sex, however, has its own part to play; and the Djanggawul cycle has indicated not only the physical but also the culturally defined ritual differences between men and women.

In this volume, when describing the beliefs and practices associated with the Djanggawul cycle and the performance of *nara* ritual, we have purposely employed the term cult. This does not mean, however, that it is controlled or shared by a select group, the acceptance of members within the order being determined by totemic, clan or linguistic group affinities, by status, prestige or economic position. This is not so. The Djanggawul cult is one of a number existing contemporaneously in this region, each having its own mythology and associated ceremonies. All these cults are in some degree interrelated, and all male members of the society are eligible as active participants. Boys and young men pass automatically through the age-grading ceremonies of the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag*. In addition to these, there are certain revelatory rituals, which are not initiatory. The extent of a man's active participation in the latter, and his eligibility for leadership, depend upon several factors—for example, on his moiety and kinship affiliations, and on whether or not the cult's mythology and ritual belong to his particular linguistic group or clan, and to his father's family. Such factors, however, never operate to debar him altogether, and in many cases his relationship to the cult through his mother's family may have a compensatory effect. The same conditions apply in the case of the major religious cults, the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara*. All men may be accepted as initiands to the *nara* ceremonies, and all may subsequently become neophytes; but the measure of their active participation and leadership depends on the factors mentioned above. Only a *dua* moiety man, belonging to the most powerful *dua* linguistic group and clan, can rise to ceremonial headmanship in the *dua nara*; and here, too, the principle of descent may operate. The writer's main informants in recording and discussing the Djanggawul songs, mythology and so on were *dua* headmen, assisted by other men who were correspondingly 'graded' in the ritual sphere.

Comparison of the myth (Chapter 2) with the Songs reveals certain inconsistencies. These may perhaps stem from the fact that the myth is an over-all sketch of the Djanggawul's journey and adventures; it allows rather more latitude and scope to individual narrators, and does not purport to describe various incidents in any great detail. On the whole, it does agree basically with the Songs; but

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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## THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

Arnhem Land belongs to two main groups, who differ considerably insofar as language and certain aspects of their culture are concerned. Perhaps the best way to present a clear general picture of their culture patterns is to outline and contrast the elements that are outstanding in both. For the sake of brevity we shall not digress to discuss minor local deviations like those of the Groote Eylandt and Rose River areas. 101

A common cultural bond links most of the Aborigines of western Arnhem Land, taking Oenpelli, the Goulburn Islands, and the Liverpool and King rivers, with its eastern boundary near Cape Stewart; but there are some traditional deviations, as well as some linguistic differences. The Maung of Goulburn Islands seem to have been at one period more or less isolated from contact with the mainlanders, who rarely came over to the islands; but at ceremonial times the Maung would come to Sandy Creek, on the mainland opposite South Goulburn Island, for the big *maraiin* (sacred) rituals. 101 184

The people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, refer to themselves as the Wulamba group, a number of clans that form a "tribe" with more or less common cultural background. Natives outside this region, for example those at Groote Eylandt, often call them the "Balamumu Confederacy". "Balamumu" may be roughly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The dialects of all these clans may be classed together as Miwoidj'mada. The whole eastern area is divided among a number of clans, some now extinct and others seriously diminished in population, which share certain linguistic groups. These language groups are considered most important, and they belong exclusively to either the *dua* or the *jiritja* moiety, a division which extends throughout this whole area. Descent within them is patrilineal, but a man (or woman) always feels some attachment to the clan and linguistic group of his mother and mother's brother. 101 184 619 [197] [616] [611]

In western Arnhem Land, tribes and groups of tribes are (or were) independent units, not subdivided into clans. Tribal blocs were formed by those dependent on their neighbours in matters affecting economy, marriage and secular and sacred ceremony, and certain tribes recognised closer ties with one another than 184 619

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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with other adjacent groups. On the border line between western and eastern Arnhem Land there are tribes affiliated with the eastern people, but retaining their own distinct cultural pattern. Apart from the linguistic variations between the eastern and western groups, and the tribal organisation of the one and the clan-linguistic group set-up of the other, the principal difference lies in the eastern form of mainly patrilineal descent and the western pattern of descent through the mother.

The moiety is the most important feature in the social organisation of the Wulamba people of the east and south-east. It serves to classify under these two main headings all clans and linguistic groups, the known universe, and the whole life of the people, and affiliates all those belonging to the same moiety. The moieties are exogamous, and are thus the basis upon which marriage rules depend.

In western Arnhem Land we find the moiety-phratry arrangement (related to the totem) now influenced from the south by the subsection system, which is widely spread throughout Aboriginal Australia. Another feature here is the *namanamaidj*, which establishes a child's affinity with his father's group. This, together with tribal and linguistic membership, is patrilineal; but the descent of the moiety, phratry (and totem), and subsection, is matrilineal.

In eastern Arnhem Land the subsections have not yet been fully co-ordinated with the kinship structure, and many of the older people do not use them. Normally, however, the subsections are based on a system of marriage and descent, and are essentially a matter of kinship organisation. They group various relatives together under one term, in such a way that for general purposes all kinship terms are reduced to eight; and since there are eight divisions in this subsection system, four belong to one moiety, and four to the other.[1]

The eastern Arnhem Landers possess certain fundamental features in common with most other Australian Aboriginal communities. Away from European settlements, for instance, they are hunters and collectors who must forage for their food. On the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land food is certainly abundant and varied, but its constant supply depends on the

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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## 5.

# THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE IN ARNHEM LAND

When a newcomer in Arnhem Land settles down among the people, he quickly becomes familiar with the material culture and technology and is struck by the localised and restricted nature of the distribution of certain elements and minor traits and even of technological materials, and by the extreme conservatism of the people.

In the case of certain elements—in particular, the *mintji*, the magnificent patterns in polychrome, the totemic designs which are the hereditary property, the "copyright", of a group called by these people, *barpuro*, (a clan or an aggregation of clans, linked by the possession of common totemic ancestors)—this is understandable. Anything, whether social or material, which touches the solidarity of these closely-integrated groups, is jealously guarded, and its infringement bitterly resented and quickly avenged.[31] So that prudence, as well as conservatism, plays a part in restricting

[31] Sometimes this may be averted by expiatory or conciliatory payments of food or *gerri* to appease the injured or offended sentiments of the individual or group, which serve to restore a state of *euphoria* or ritual goodwill. But these presentations are invariably carried out in a ritual or ceremonial manner which gives them the stamp of formal approval of the society acting as a group and so lifts them above the level of mere personal or private feuds.

184 424 614 [226] the free use of certain elements, because they are regarded as the special prerogative of one clan or group of clans. This applies most strongly to matters which relate to clan totemism, but in material culture it may extend even to such things as the technique of fish capture, the right to practise some specialised method of fishing, such as the *gorl*,[32] which have been developed in adaptation to peculiar local conditions and which are regarded as the exclusive property of the members of one clan or group of clans, who alone have the traditional right, not merely to fish in one territory, but even the exclusive right to practise the technique itself. In the case of the *gorl*, which is one of the most specialised methods of fish capture found anywhere in the world, this can easily be explained, for the technique is used only in one area on the Glyde River where it is localised in the territory of one or possibly of two, clans, and is therefore regarded as under protection of the *wänärr*, the ancestors of the clan or clans concerned.

184 424 [688] [685] [628] The restriction of the use of such traits and specialised techniques as the *gorl*, which are jealously guarded, and of which any infringement is bitterly resented and visited by vengeance, often leading to fighting and interclan feud, rests upon the belief that the heritage which its members have received from the *wänärr*, the ancestors of the clan, has been infringed, and that its solidarity has suffered damage thereby, rather than from economic motives such as the desire to monopolise food supplies, raw materials, or *gerri*, as with civilised man.

181 184 Even apart from these matters which touch on the solidarity of groups and which therefore restrict the distribution of a trait or process, the people are extremely

[113] [32] See Donald F. Thomson, *A New Type of Fish Trap from Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, Man. 1938, No. 216.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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conservative, and this fact leaves a strong local stamp on their material culture. Certain types of utensils may be found only in one local area, and even spears, of which about 30 different types occur in Arnhem Land, can often be distinguished by a local preference for such minor traits as the use of one particular bast fibre (*daiyärrk*) for lashing, or of one resin—whether *ŋotjamän*, (*Canarium australasicum*), *maipin bortj*[33] (*Erythrophloeum*), or the hard, brittle, black resin of *lännapu*, (*Callitris*), "Cyprus Pine", for each of which there may be a strong bias in a certain local area. The use of such materials is laid down by tradition, and the aboriginal craftsman is conservative, not much given to experiment. He follows the pattern which is traditional because he believes it was established by the *wäŋärr* (his totemic ancestors).

In contrast with this extreme conservatism in the use of raw materials and in the technique employed in material culture, it is sometimes surprising to find suddenly, in an area as remote from outside contacts as far Eastern and Central Arnhem Land were when I first went to live with these people in 1935, 36 and 37, such elements as boomerangs, (*källi-gälli*), which are not made in this territory, bearing all the marks of authenticity of specimens from Katherine or Daly Waters—some two or three hundred miles away to the south or south-west. And these are accompanied by such articles as the closely-woven forehead fillets called *källämba*, heavy and closely-woven "bibs" or aprons called *mätta mätta*, *märtät* or *tjänauwo*, worn around the neck, suspended on the chest during fights, and *bäkkürämma* or *bäkka* (spears, having heads of ironwood with very long

[33] *Bortj* is really liver and is apparently applied to this resin on account of the practice of moulding it into large lumps suggesting the lobes of a liver.

*Kinship* is very important in Australia and is the chief factor underlying social organisation and behaviour both between individuals and between groups. Every individual is born into a kinship pattern which under the classificatory system defines his relationship not only with his own kin but also with all those whom he meets during the ordinary course of his life. Kinship terms, or terms of relationship, are used in place of personal names. They are not mere terms of address, for each carries a set pattern of behaviour. 602

*Mälla*, in literal translation, any *group*, but used also in a special sense for an aggregation of clans linked together by the possession of common totems or by the sharing of at least a part of a common totemic inheritance. 614 615

*Moiety* (see dual division).

*Patrilineal*. Descent in clan and in certain other social groups is traced either in the male or in the female line, i.e. through the father or through the mother. When reckoned through the father it is *patrilineal* and when traced through the mother it is said to be *matrilineal*. 000

*Totems and totemism*. A totem has been defined as an animal, plant or inanimate object, with which a person, or a group of people, believe that they have a special relationship. This is true, but it does not go far enough. Many different kinds of totemism are known in Australia, including clan, moiety, conceptional, personal, cult and ceremonial totemism. In all, a very special relationship exists between the individual or the group and its totem or totems. Often, in clan totemism, the people believe that they are descended from one of the totemic ancestors of their clan and that these ancestors, called *wäŋarr in* Eastern Arnhem Land, founded the clan and its culture and way of life and established the traditions which the people follow today. 779

*Tribe*. In Australia the tribe is merely a linguistic unit, a group of people often very loosely united by the possession of a common language, and whose component clans occupy a certain definite territory. It is certainly not the most important unit of social life. It is not the land-owning group, the law-making or war-making group and has no political autonomy. Tribal organisation is conspicuous by its absence from most of Eastern Arnhem Land, although normal tribal organisation occurs at Groote Eylandt, at Bennet Bay and on the southern boundary of the territory, along the Roper River, as well as from the vicinity of Cape Stewart westwards. [197] 619 [184]

magical rites and spells, it does not involve the co-operation of spirit familiars.

The majority of informants stated that the cult of the *marrngit* is not a hereditary one, and they asserted that although the son of a *marrngitmirri* father may also be *marrngitmirri*, membership of the cult does not necessarily pass from father to son. But at least one informant of Wanguri clan, a clan of Mindjikai *barpuro*, declared that in his own clan, of which the principal territory is at Arnhem Bay, a little to the south and east of Elcho Island, the cult of the *marrngit* was hereditary and did pass from father to son. On controversial issues of this kind, long discussions often took place among the old men who acted as informants, and finally they would reach agreement and give me their verdict. Far from being careless or merely anxious to please, they took great pains to check information by referring to people who possessed specialized knowledge, and took much trouble in settling any doubtful point. My informants declared that the *marrngit* was also hereditary in the Burara tribe, where, however, the cult of the *ragalk* was also established and was certainly dominant. Some conflict, or difference of opinion, does occur in matters of this kind particularly in north-eastern Arnhem Land where there is no hard and fast, or orthodox, view, supported by a large body of opinion.

This means that, as might be expected, in the absence of a written language or an organized body to formalize belief, there is necessarily some degree of flexibility, some scope for individual ideas, and within the atypical, intensely segmentary, social organization of eastern Arnhem Land, this variability tends to be emphasized. Even in matters of kinship, which concerns the entire group, since it regulates all behaviour, differences sometimes occurred and the people would call in old men and submit an intricate or knotty problem to them in the way that I have mentioned above.

It was intended originally to confine this paper to a short account of the *marrngitmirri*, translated from the statements of the medicinemen themselves, and to follow this with descriptions of the *marrngit*, which are shown in the accompanying plates of actual drawings of their spirit familiars made by these medicinemen. But my attention has been drawn to an article by the late Revd. T. T. Webb published some years ago, 'The Making of a Marrngit,'[2] which contains some errors and misconceptions, and I have therefore extended the scope of this article to discuss the relationship of the medicineman and sorcerer in Arnhem Land and the roles and the distribution of these cults.

In the opening paragraph of this article Mr. Webb says: 'In east Arnhem Land there are two classes of magicians

[p.97(c)]

754 speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*3 is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area.
617 It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

124 The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of
754 people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or
184 sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults,
[114] the cults of the *marrngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

756 The more or less benevolent *marrngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the
777 *ragalk* does not exist.
754 I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission
177 from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people
184 of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moiety) and Kopapoingo-

speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham, Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they came to regard the people of the west—whom they called *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since, resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack did not occur.

As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirrirri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between whom marriage was permitted were actually members of the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of them '*ngamak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

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821 825 789 the clouds together and pushing the wind before them in the way that water spreads out before a rolling stone. As he labours the snake weeps copiously and his tears fall as rain. If a snake is not available for rain-making, a bundle of grass may be tied together and submerged in a waterhole. Instructions are sung to this before its immersion, whereupon [776] the great Spirit who made the world and at times revealed himself through the mythical serpent, assumes the functions of the missing earthly reptile and sends the rain.

In west Arnhem Land another mythological serpent [184] sends rain in response to aboriginal wizardry. He shows himself as the rainbow, and thunder is the rumbling of his body as he turns over to urinate in the form of rain. To impress his admirers with his strength, Umbij hits two stones together till they flash fiery lightning.

821 789 888 If an old man is offended at some slight in the wet season he will threaten to send a storm. All day Munju had been mumbling and scowling at the door of his shelter, but his temper improved considerably toward sundown as nimbus clouds gathered to the accompaniment of distant thunder. That night a fierce tropical storm swept over the island, trees were struck by lightning, thunder crashed, and the wind howled as it levelled trees and shelters. In the sparkling stillness of the following dawn, the sun rose over a subdued camp, where Munju's honour had been vindicated, and he accepted the homage of his contemporaries. Also in the stormy wet season I heard a noisy termagant at Yirrkala [302] [578] objecting to young women cutting their hair, and when they persisted she threatened to call up a storm. That night we had heavy rain and a strong wind, and next day old Bamaja's exploit was referred to in subdued tones. Like most rain-makers she was aged, and having lived in the open air for sixty years with no other shelter than a sheet of bark, she knew her weather and could make a fairly accurate forecast.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# *Burial Rites and Cannibalism*

DEATH and burial customs are much the same from one end of Arnhem Land to the other. Bodies are artistically painted and decorated before they are buried or exposed on platforms or in trees. Later the bones are collected and hoarded by relatives till they feel disposed to deposit them in decorated burial posts. In one district bones are removed from the body and parts of the flesh are eaten in an effort to form a link with the dead. This ceremonial cannibalism is confined to three or four hordes, but all Arnhem Land nomads attempt to communicate with their dead and call on them for assistance.

Mau's young son slipped from an overhanging tree, and in falling into the water struck his head on a canoe. No one saw the accident and he was not missed till his body drifted downstream to the beach. Two youths carried the corpse to the camp, but by coming into contact with it they had attracted its spirit or 'mali', which lodged in their skin. Before they dared to eat any food they must needs free themselves from the ghost by smearing red-ochre on their arms.

That night the entire camp of several inter-related hordes combined in a ceremony conducted by the child's grandfather. Alternately he wailed and sang a prayer to the spirit of his dead brother, the child's tribal grandfather, asking him to come and take the young spirit to the spirit world of 'Buralkor'. The camp set about preventing the spirit or mali from haunting them, and drove it from the camp by switching their bodies with heated leafy twigs.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# *Creation Myths—Out of the Dawn*

*773 [791] As with most primitive people, the story of Creation is of the utmost importance to the aboriginal. Everything he says and does, from the songs he sings to the way he catches and cooks his food, is determined by the way it was done by his mythical creators. A striking similarity links aboriginal creation stories with the myths of all primitive peoples, even to the inclusion of a supernatural serpent. One Arnhem Land snake went so far as to eat two of the ancestral agents; today he is the most important living link with the spirit [821] world. His voice is thunder, and lightning flashes from his tongue.

Legends in east Arnhem Land say that these mythical Ancestors came from 'over the sea' and 'beyond the dawn'; hordes in the west believe that their creative agents came from beyond the sunset.

776 *773 Junkgowa, or creative Ancestresses, came from the spirit-world of Buralkor. Wangarr is the Great Spirit of Buralkor, and though vague and indefinite in form and purpose, he long ago expressed himself through semi-human Junkgowa-agents, and continues to reveal himself in any unusual [821] happening, such as an eclipse, an earth tremor, or a cyclone. [778] Junkgowa created important food-producing areas, unusual rock formations, peculiar water-holes and springs, which are links with the spirit-world.

Stories of creation vary greatly, for in east Arnhem Land the Junkgowa travelled some three hundred miles up and ● [184] down amongst a group of three dozen hordes, and now each horde jealously preserves a detailed account of what

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took place in its own particular territory. Yet the essentials of the story agree to an astonishing extent, considering that there is no written language and that details must be passed on orally or in ochre-painted pictures. By far the biggest variation concerns the Junkgowa's sex, for in the east, where they landed, it is said that they were male and female, but half-way across the social group it is maintained that they were sisters.

Before leaving the spirit-world the Junkgowa created the sea so that they could travel in their long-nosed canoe, which was paddled in much the same way as their human descendants learnt to paddle theirs, and they made light of their toil by improvising songs. First they sang about their paddles, and this 'paddle song' is preserved as a chorus in an important ceremony recording Junkgowa songs and tales of their deeds. Waves rose for the first time, so they sang about them, and also about turtle, dugong, sharks, deep sea fish, and a porpoise that guided them on their way. A seagull that followed the canoe, and at times rested on it, is also immortalized in song.

But singing alone could not do away with their toil and fatigue, and the Junkgowa became so hot that they called up the cool south-east monsoon, which rose in the spirit-land, and has blown steadily for at least five months in every succeeding year. With the breeze behind them they hoisted a sail, and after several nights and days they made a landfall. Near the shore the sea was too rough for safe landing, so the Junkgowa stopped the wind and thereby introduced the calm that now follows the south-east monsoon and precedes the north-west monsoon. Presumably they did not allow for a treacherous 'ninth' wave that over-turned the canoe, and this incident is authenticated by a long black rock that rose out of the waves to mark the scene of the accident and to enshrine the lesser-spirit of the canoe. Yulengor point out the rock to their sons to this day.

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record the event. At high tide this rock is covered by sea water, and to this day it pours out a stream of fresh crystal-clear water.

A geologist might explain this Junkgowa miracle, by observing that the spring-water holds iron in solution, and that as it bubbles up, the surrounding sand is cemented and built into a crater. A similar structure in Arnhem Bay was put to use by Macassar traders, who wedged a hollow tree trunk into the neck of the spring. The fresh spring-water rose inside the tree, ran out along the hollow limb and into the fishermen's buckets brought alongside in their canoes. Though the salt water rose over the spring, the fresh water continued to flow from this improvised fountain.

Once the Elcho Island totems had been established, the Junkgowa parted company. The Men remained to guard the site, but the female Junkgowa had many totems and unborn children to distribute, so they crossed to the mainland. They followed the shores of Castlereagh Bay, placing the totems, establishing new hordes, creating peculiar rock formations, and making food areas. By the sea they made shallow marine plains, and on them planted sea-grass, and in these salt-water pastures they left turtle and dugong. Near the head of the bay the Women produced children in greater numbers, saying: 'We must go slowly up and down, leaving hordes and totems here, or we shall never get rid of them.' This accounts for the large number of hordes around Castlereagh Bay, which has the densest population in Arnhem Land. On a wide plain they planted clumps of jungle and allocated a separate jungle to each horde for its totem centre, and in each jungle a pair of children were born and told to inaugurate a horde.

By the low-lying shores of Castlereagh Bay the Women found salt-water plains, where they opened their dilly-bags to distribute totems, but found that they had already given away all those decorated with red feathers. Those remaining

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were adorned with clay, string, and fur, and in consequence this form of decoration is still used here, whereas to the east of Castlereagh Bay strikingly beautiful decorations are made with red and green parrot feathers.

Two old Men who were sitting by their fish traps, saw the Women, and said: 'What Women are these?' Self-consciously both Men and Junkgowa Women wound string round their waists and snatched green twigs for pubic shields. Later the Men invited the Women to share their camp: 'Come over here,' they said, 'we have plenty of fish.' As they approached the camp, the Women noticed that their Junkgowa dialect had undergone a subtle change, for they were unconsciously adopting the dialect of the fishermen. For many moons the Ancestresses ate fish from the fish traps, which are still a pronounced feature in aboriginal life on the salt plains. They taught the Men new songs and dances and sent out their offspring with totems and stone implements to found hordes. But beckoning smoke again rose in the west, and the Ancestresses left the Men to their fish traps.

From this point the account of their wanderings is vague, for they reached the borders of a new group of hordes which have their own creation myths, beliefs, customs, and language. Nevertheless, my informers emphatically asserted that, although these western 'foreigners' are self-contained and have no intercourse eastward, they were created by the Junkgowa. My guides had previously skirted the 'foreign' west country in canoes and pearling luggers, and when they noticed any features such as the sand dunes at Hall's Point and nearby food swamps they claimed them as the work of the Junkgowa.

Still farther to the west, some five hundred miles from their original landing at Port Bradshaw, the Women came to the open sea at Cape Don. They were perplexed by the sight of the sea barring their way, and scratched their heads, and threw the lice into the sea. But the lice

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and after a quick glance at the totem they kept their eyes on the ground. Eventually they were induced to touch the totem, after which the whole party filed back to the main camp for food, and indulged in the usual singing and dancing.

With her journey's end in sight, Numma Moiyuk crossed the Liverpool River and camped behind Boucaut Bay. On a wide plain she made a lagoon and filled it with water-lilies and fish. Her remaining offspring were born beside the lake and she taught them all she knew. These children raised up distinct hordes, but they all camped with the Goddess by the lake. They ingeniously account for a number of their dances and songs, and for certain arts and crafts, which are unknown elsewhere in the west, by saying that they were special gifts from Numma Moiyuk. Thus they effectively forestall any pagan suggestion that such customs may have come from the adjacent, eastern 'foreign' group where, strange to relate, they are in everyday use.

For many years the aged Goddess stayed with the Boucaut Bay hordes, and through her they became mighty warriors and hunters. But they became so dependent on her, that when she died they not only lost a leader but were in danger of a severe reduction in strength and prestige. Finally they decided to retain her strength and skill by absorbing her body; so they cooked and ate her.

To this day the ceremonial practice is continued, and all but the diseased and aged are eaten. In the same way as Numma Moiyuk's spirit returned to the spirit world under the tide-rip at Cape Don, all aboriginal spirits return to Numma Moiyuk; and the singing and wailing accompanying a burial are prayers to the goddess to receive and care for the departed. Numma Moiyuk watches over the affairs of men and sends out young spirits to populate the land. Sexual intercourse itself does not result in conception, but is an appeal to the Mother of creation to send a young spirit from